

Introduction and Summary

The South Lewis County Subarea is located in the southwest portion of Lewis County. The Subarea is located along the I-5 corridor south of the major population center of the County (the cities of Centralia, Chehalis, and Napavine). The Subarea is approximately 106 square miles, or 67,000 acres, in size (see Figure 1.1). The Subarea includes the cities of Toledo, Vader, and Winlock and their associated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). Outside of the three cities, the subarea is mostly rural with a mix of agriculture, rural residential, forest, and open space (see Figure 1.2). With an estimated 10,200 residents as of 2008, South Lewis County is poised for major economic and community change in the years ahead. As the last portion of the Interstate 5 freeway corridor with five largely undeveloped interchange areas, South County is strategically positioned for growth between the Seattle-Tacoma and Portland-Vancouver metro areas.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the South Lewis County Subarea Plan is to guide future decision making for land use, capital facilities investment, and economic development in an environmentally sustainable way through 2030. A considerable body of technical analysis has contributed to the preparation of this plan. Economic, land use, transportation, and environmental profiles of the subarea describe current conditions, forecast potential, and set the foundation for proposed goals, policies, and strategies that are intended to deliver the community's vision of the future.

This plan will be adopted into the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan where it will be consistent with – and supplementary to – the adopted goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and the Countywide Planning Policies. The Subarea plan provides a greater level of detail and a more specific framework for local and regional decision-making about infrastructure and public service improvements.

Vision

A vision statement is a description of how the community will look and function in the future. This vision statement, formulated by the South Lewis County Subarea Steering Committee through extensive public meetings and discussions, is used to guide the goals and policies of the Subarea Plan:

- In 2030, South Lewis County exhibits a diverse rural character featuring a variety of farming, forestry, and low-density residential uses and small urban town centers.
- Protected natural features include streams, wildlife habitats, and flood plains.
- Winlock, Toledo, and Vader provide services to local residents and offer a broad range of recreational opportunities and attractions to visitors.
- The southern gateways to Lewis County are concentrated at the I-5 interchanges where regional hospitality and entertainment centers serving travelers provide important employment and tax revenue benefits to the local economy.
- Major industrial businesses are operating at key locations, providing family-wage jobs and secondary economic benefits.
- The growth in population and increased quality of life has enabled successful growth in services and retail businesses to serve the local community.
- The community – a partnership of Lewis County, local elected officials and leaders:

- Supports new development that is compatible with, and preserves the natural and historical environment, including water resources.
- Manages growth to reinforce the agrarian rural/small town character of the area that includes agriculture, open space, and trails as important elements maintaining South County's economic, cultural, and social structure.
- Supports the provision of adequate public services to new development without compromising existing levels of service or burdening existing residents with the costs of growth.
- Monitors the cumulative effects of growth and development on the desired quality of life.

In addition to establishing a vision for the future of South County, the Steering Committee developed a set of "Guiding Principles" to follow during the preparation of the plan. These include:

- Protect the right to farm.
- Encourage a variety of urban and rural business uses.
- Support the provision of parks, recreation areas, and open space.
- Coordinate the provision of urban-serving wastewater, stormwater, and water systems.
- Encourage the provision of economical and efficient public services including public safety, education, and emergency services.
- Support a comprehensive transportation system.
- Maintain attractive and amenable pedestrian and bicycle ways.
- Manage growth with sustainability and emphasize urban mixed-use developments through the use of master planning and development agreements.

Geography of South Lewis County

The geography of the South Lewis County Subarea ranges from river valleys to rolling hills. The major geographic feature in the Subarea is the Cowlitz River, which flows southwest through the City of Toledo and across the southern portion of the Subarea. The main tributaries of the Cowlitz River in the Subarea include Lacamas, Olequa, and Salmon Creeks. The primary landform in the Subarea is a series of flat terraces leading away from the Cowlitz River.

There are many topographic features in the Subarea including Wilkes Hills and Finn Hill. There are a number of grasslands in the Subarea including the Lacamas, Grand, Jackson, and Napavine Prairies. Most of these prairies have been converted to agricultural use, although some native vegetation remains. In the Subarea, there is a mix of land uses: rural forest, grasslands, farmlands, residential, commercial, and industrial. The elevation above sea level in the Subarea ranges from less than 60 feet at the Cowlitz River to over 700 feet in the hills in the northwest.

Planning Process

The Subarea Plan was prepared through a partnership between Lewis County and the Cities of Toledo, Vader, and Winlock. Additional assistance was provided by the Washington State Departments of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife. Phase One, completed in 2009, was partially funded by a grant administered by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development. Throughout the process, Lewis County provided project management services and facilitated the process. The South Lewis County Subarea Steering Committee was appointed by the Board of County Commissioners to guide the Subarea process.

The stakeholders established a schedule of regular meetings starting in 2008. The meeting agendas included presentations of technical studies by the consultant team, discussions of goals and visions, and updates on local programs and plans.

In May 2009, a public open house was held to display all of the materials generated during Phase One, and the Phase One draft plan was published in June, 2009. The Steering Committee was reconvened in February 2010 to refine the draft plan and prepare recommendations for action by the Board of County Commissioners. Another public open house was hosted by the Steering Committee on July 14, 2010.

GMA Framework

In 1990, the Washington State Legislature, intending to encourage economic prosperity and balanced economic growth throughout the state, found that while the Puget Sound region was experiencing economic prosperity and the challenges associated with rapid growth, much of the rest of the state was not experiencing economic prosperity and faced challenges associated with slow economic growth.

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) states that to accomplish economic growth throughout the whole state: "Growth must be managed more effectively in the Puget Sound region and rural areas must build local capacity to accommodate additional economic activity in their communities. Where possible, economies and low income areas should be linked with prosperous urban economies to share economic growth for the benefit of all areas of the state."

The act further states, "to accomplish this goal, it is the intent of this legislature to insure equitable opportunities to secure prosperity for distressed areas, rural communities, and disadvantaged populations by promoting urban/rural economic links and by promoting value-added product development, business networks, and increased exports from rural areas."

RCW 36.70A.115 further states: "Counties and cities that are required or choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 [GMA] shall ensure that, taken collectively, adoption of and amendments to their comprehensive plans and/or development regulations provide sufficient capacity of land suitable for development within their jurisdictions to accommodate their allocated housing and employment growth, including the accommodation of, as appropriate, the medical, governmental, educational, institutional, commercial, and industrial facilities related to such growth, as adopted in the applicable countywide planning policies and consistent with the twenty-year population forecast from the office of financial management."

In 2010 the State legislature amended the Growth Management Act to authorize cities and counties to prepare and adopt, at any time, "an initial subarea plan for economic development located outside the one hundred year floodplain in a county that has completed a state-funded pilot project that is based on watershed characterization and local habitat assessment." The South County Subarea Plan satisfies these criteria.

The GMA allows subarea plans to be used to design communities at a higher level of specificity than is possible for entire counties or individual cities. Subarea plans therefore may provide for detailed implementation of zoning, infrastructure designs, capital financing, public-private development strategies, and other decision strategies.

The South Lewis County Subarea Plan has been drafted within the existing framework of the County and cities' Comprehensive Plans and the Countywide Planning Policies. Consequently, those adopted policies are not repeated here.

Key Factors from the Planning Process

The following summarizes the key components that resulted from the Subarea planning process.

- The cities must continue to be the “home towns” for the region because they act as focal points for community identity. They should be able to sustain the local quality of life with shopping, services, recreation, a mix of urban housing choices, and places for education and interaction.
- The cities need support from the County, the private sector, and the state and federal governments to finance the extraordinary costs of maintaining high quality infrastructure that will sustain urban growth and economic development.
- Local comprehensive plans should be updated and coordinated to strengthen regional partnership for marketing, finance, revenue sharing, and capital investment.
- Local development regulations and permitting procedures should be streamlined.
- Large-scale projects, such as industrial parks and freeway mixed-use centers, will require substantial public-private cooperation to create appropriate development standards, develop urban-scale infrastructure, and ensure that environmental impacts are mitigated.
- Portions of the Subarea have been identified as prime habitats and important hydrological resources that should be protected.
- Interstate 5 and county arterials will need major improvements to support increased traffic demands resulting from growth in the Subarea.
- Economic development forecasts indicate that by 2030, South County could see between 5,000 and 6,000 new jobs in a variety of businesses using about 2,000 acres of land in the cities and UGAs. About 25,000 people will call South County home.

Policies

The following policies were developed to guide the preparation of the South County Subarea Plan. These policies are based on the vision, guiding principles and major findings of the Steering Committee.

Land Use

- SCS-LU 1** Economic Development Urban Growth Areas should be designated in the South Lewis County Subarea for the development of light industry, tourist related services and regional retail and services. Economic Development UGAs are those Urban Growth Areas that are not adjacent to a municipality and within which development proposals are processed in accordance with Lewis County regulations.
- SCS-LU 2** The criteria for designation of Economic Development UGAs should be parcel size, access to transportation, access to urban services and minimal environmental constraints.
- SCS-LU 3** Lands with appropriate parcel size, access to transportation and a low level of environmental constraints, but for which urban services (sewer and water) are

not practical, should be designated as Urban Reserve Areas for potential future designation as Urban Growth Area. Subdivision of land in Urban Reserve areas should be restricted to maintain the potential of commercial and industrial development.

- SCS-LU 4** Commercial uses or services that would replace community oriented uses currently or potentially located in the town centers of Toledo, Vader or Winlock should not be allowed in the Economic Development UGAs.

Environment

- SCS-E 1** The areas identified in the by the Department of Ecology in “Watershed Characterization and Analysis of South Lewis County, and by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in “South Lewis County Habitat Report” as being priority areas for protection, restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitat and connectivity should be the focus of off-site mitigation for development within both the Economic Development UGAs and the municipal UGAs.
- SCS-E 2** Incentive mechanisms should be included in the development standards for the Economic Development UGAs by which the footprint of development could be increased if offset by protection, restoration or enhancement of wildlife habitat and/or connectivity in the identified priority conservation areas.
- SCS-E 3** The application of incentive mechanisms within the Economic Development UGAs should not preclude nor override the application of the regulations and standards of the Lewis County Critical Areas Ordinance.

Capital Facilities

- SCS-CF 1** Each individual development within the Economic Development UGAs should be required to analyze the development’s relative impact on adjacent and surrounding infrastructure including roads, water, sewer and stormwater.
- SCS-CF 2** Each individual development within the Economic Development UGAs shall mitigate the relative infrastructure impacts of the development by means of construction, monetary contribution, no-protest agreements, or other mechanisms available to Lewis County.
- SCS-CF 3** Lewis County should evaluate if County participation in the financing of infrastructure improvements within the Economic Development UGAs is appropriate as a means of supporting economic development.
- SCS-CF 4** The Regional Water and Sewer Utility to be created by Lewis County, the South County Cities and the Cowlitz Tribe should provide services that are economical, efficient and reliable for all users.

Transportation

- SCS-T 1** Lewis County should evaluate if the imposition of Traffic Impact Fees on new development would be effective and appropriate in the Economic Development UGAs.

- SCS-T 2** Future transportation planning and infrastructure improvements should include facilities for non-motorized modes of transportation such as bike lanes and trails.

Economic Development

- SCS-ED 1** Lewis County should develop an aggressive development posture for the South County Subarea so that South County will become a competitive player for I-5 corridor industrial, tourism and retail/service related development in western Washington.
- SCS-ED 2** An on-going leadership organization should be created that represents subarea cities, Lewis County, the Lewis County Economic Development Council, residents, businesses, property owners and other interested South County organizations whose role will be to guide the implementation of the economic development strategy.
- SCS-ED 3** The economic development strategy should include a series of “action steps”. For each action step, the leadership organization should identify the lead and supporting participants, the resources needed, and the relative priority of the action.

Recreation

- SCS-R 1** Lewis County should coordinate with Washington State Parks to promote Lewis & Clark State Park as a regional recreational destination.
- SCS-R 2** Lewis County should foster the private development of regional recreational facilities such as water parks, equestrian facilities etc. in the South County Subarea.

Housing

- SCS-H 1** In accordance with the Growth Management Act, housing to support commercial and industrial development in the Economic Development UGAs will be developed in the UGAs of the South County cities in accordance with their respective Comprehensive Plans.

Figure 1.1: South County Subarea Base Map

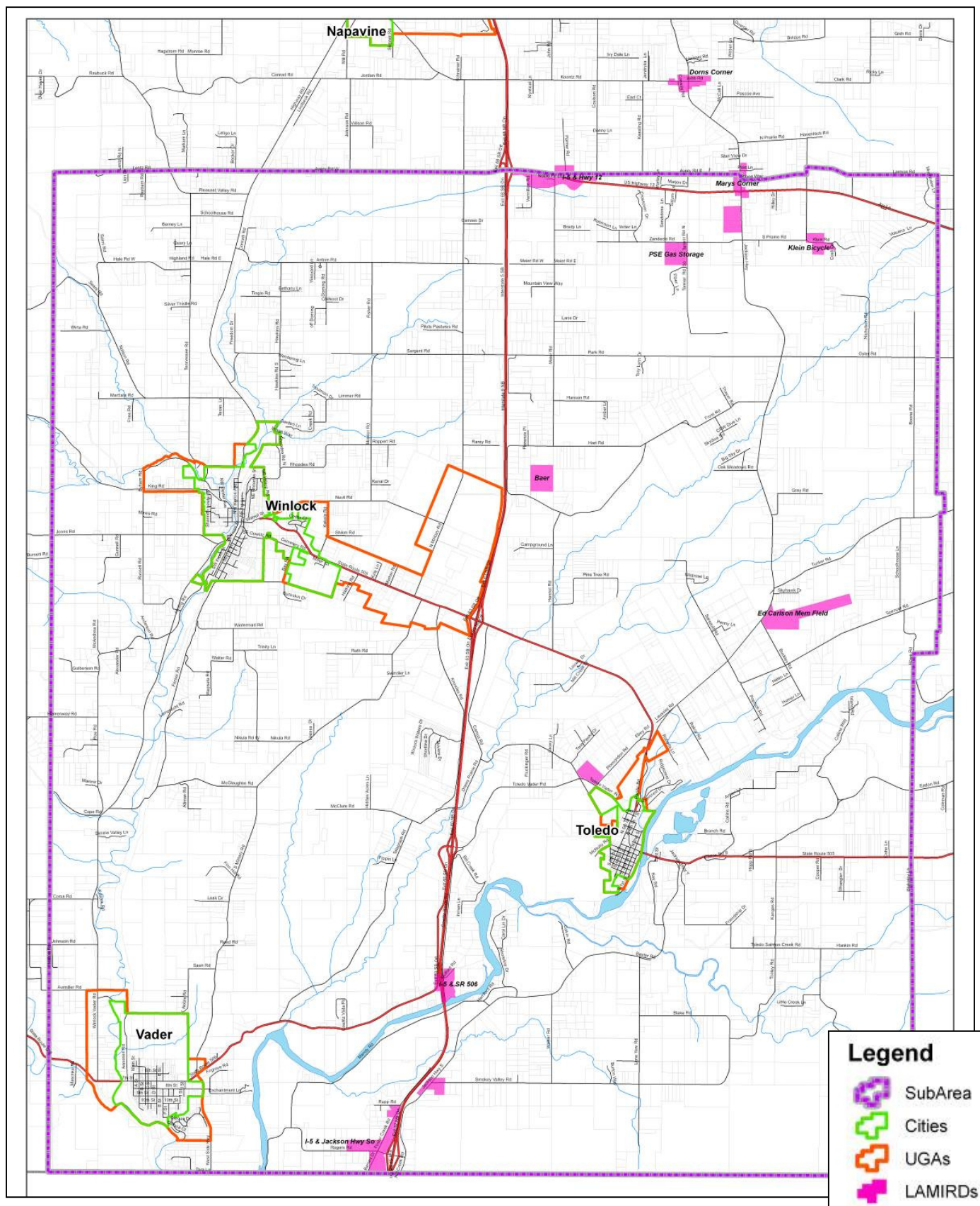
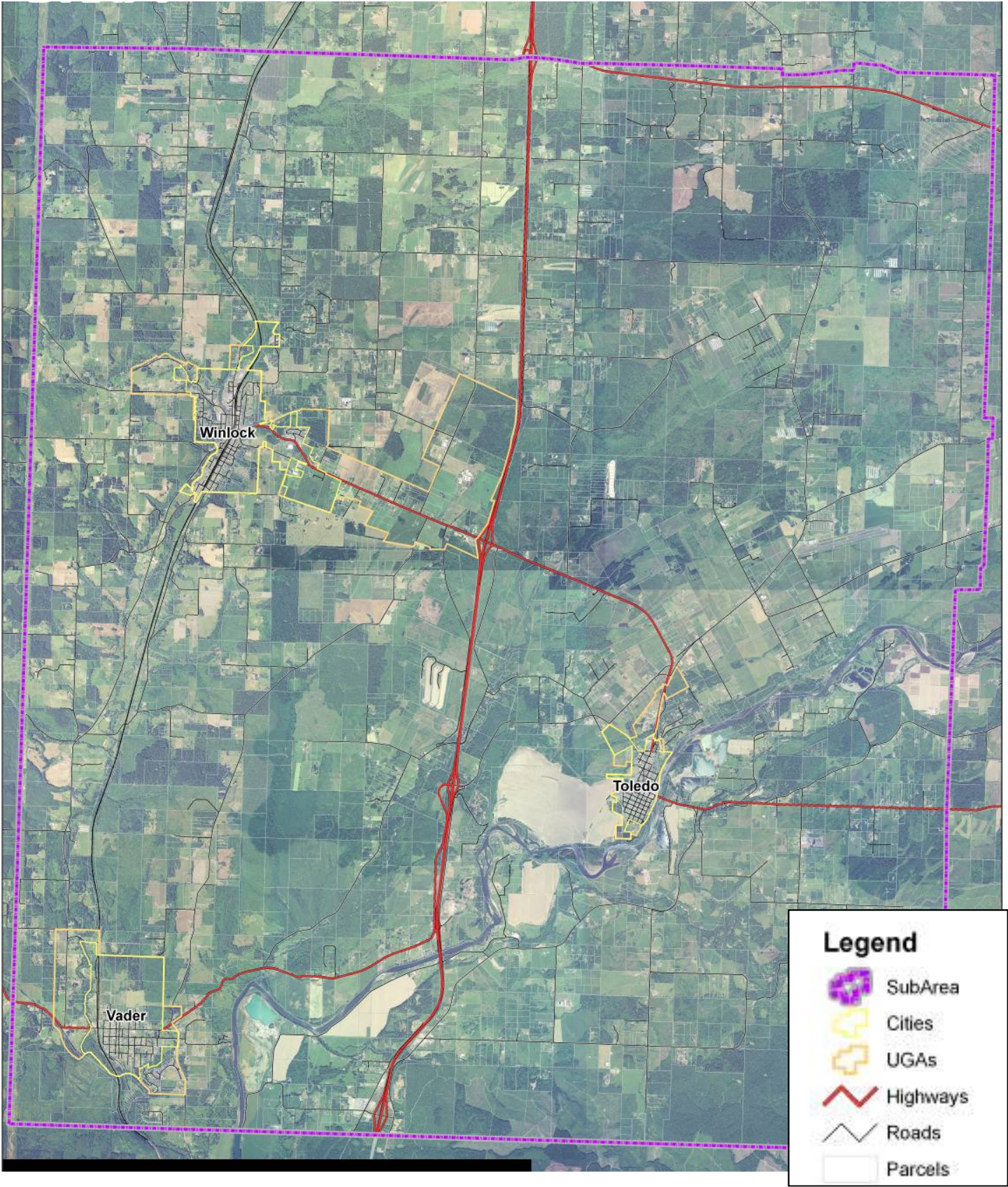


Figure 1.2: South County Subarea Aerial Photograph




Legend

 SubArea

 Cities

 UGAs

 Highways

 Roads

 Parcels